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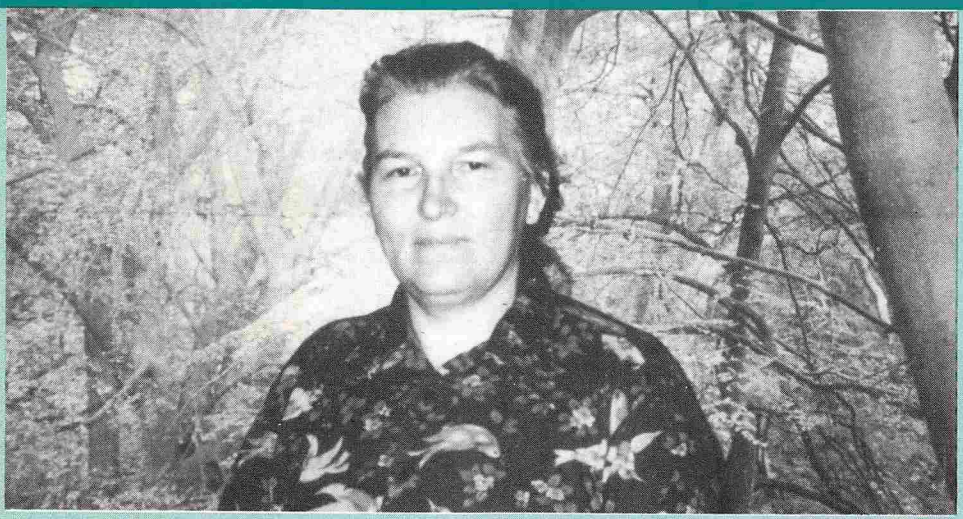

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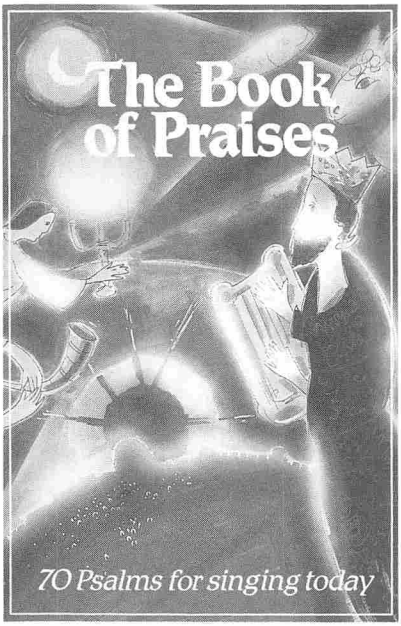
The Book of Praises



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Front cover – *Mrs. Serafima Yudintseva, wife of Christian minister Vasili Yudintseva, has, for the past two years lived with a prison sentence hanging over her. Her husband is behind bars. The reason for the postponement of her sentence is that her youngest child will be four years old and 'clemency' has been shown because of the care needed for the little boy. But our sister has six other children all under 18 who will be left as orphans! The prison sentences are for practising the Christian faith in the manner that is the case throughout the free world. Does not this highlight the diabolical cruelty of the Communist system? We are all pleased to hear that about 140 political dissidents have been released in Russia during January this year. However this has made no difference for the believers. Their plight is as bad as ever. We hear of an increasing number of women sent to prison for their faith. Alas! So far there is no change for Christians under Gorbachev. The photo is by permission of FRIEDENSSTIMME, P.O. Box 10, Leicester LE3 2FX.*

Editorial

The Carey Conference

From January 6th to 8th the sun shone brilliantly through cloudless skies upon Liverpool. The following week there was a dramatic change, heavy snow and freezing conditions gripped all the U.K. bringing many communication lines to a halt. The first Carey Conference for ministers in 1970, held at Wadderton outside Birmingham, was reached by about 40 men who travelled through heavy snowfalls to get there. That was, claimed David Kingdon the first conference of its kind in Britain for 157 years (the last was a gathering of particular Baptists, see the first article in the first issue of *R.T.*, 1970). We were very grateful for the favourable conditions this year, but much more so for the excellent spirit of unity that characterised the conference as a whole. Also there was a record attendance of 160. Rathbone Hall, Liverpool University, was advantageous. However at least ten attainable improvements have been noted by John Rubens for next year, January 5th-7th, again at Rathbone.

One of the main features of the conference was the 'meatiness' of the materials. Not only was there a record attendance but a record demand for the cassette recordings. Details of the addresses appear in this issue on page 19 and we hope to print a synopsis of every exposition in the next edition of the magazine. The reason why the usual principle of 'not more than 59 minutes' was breached in most instances was because the nature of the subjects made that very difficult.

A conference requires that there be debate. A most vigorous debate followed what proved to be the most 'reforming' of the expositions, namely that on John 17 by Donald MacLeod. Other sessions such as the superb study of Justification and Righteousness in the O.T. by John Waite, were essentially didactic in nature (preachers listening to that cassette should have texts and passages galore springing to life in their minds), but the material on unity revealed the nature of the body of Christ in a most powerful way which severely rebuked isolationism and harmful censorious attitudes. The synopsis of this paper is longer than the others so that the issues can be appreciated by our readers. Disappointment was expressed because of the brevity of the discussion after Don Carson's paper on the sovereignty of God and prayer. With Paul Helm present (he teaches philosophy in the university) that was potential missed, but we can never presume that there will be a spontaneous willingness for a full 'rugby tackle' by one specialist on another in public.

John 17 and the way in which we express our unity

The substance of Donald MacLeod's address together with the discussion it aroused revealed that we need to give more attention to church government. Unfortunately when that theme is discussed it often leads to suspicion, defensive attitudes, slogans and caricatures. Most of us have been told that

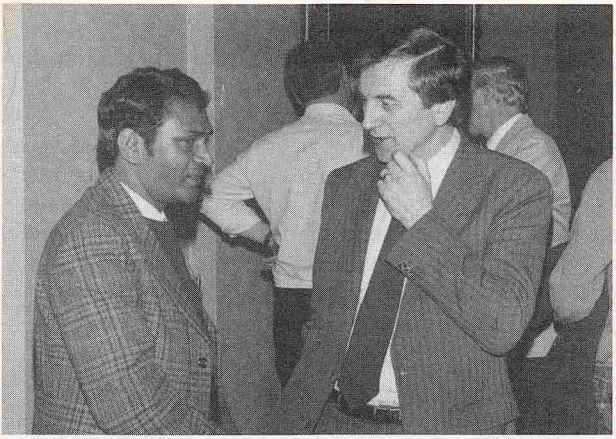
Independency is *the* right form of government, but I cannot recall anyone telling me what Independency is, or why it is automatically *the* right way. Also many of us have been told that Presbyterianism is dangerous. The result is that we respond negatively if 'our side' is criticised. But exactly what is Independency? Is it the simple principle that each local church is self governing? It would be hard to envisage any other way of practically governing a local church! If that is Independency then we should be concerned if it is threatened. But self government is only one aspect of Independency.

Individual Presbyterian churches also govern themselves. It is when we come to think of churches in their relationship to each other that the different systems come into operation, Episcopacy (bishops), Presbyterianism (the Synod), or Association (cooperation according to mutually agreed principles which can be so binding – e.g. the Southern Baptist Convention – that some forms of Presbyterianism would seem to be weak by comparison).

If however Independency means isolationism then that is patently unbiblical and erroneous. If it means isolationism then it is little wonder that J. H. Thornwell described Independency as 'rags and tatters' (see his *Collected Writings,* vol. 4). 'Rags and tatters' exactly describes the situation in England where there are innumerable, small, fragmented, evangelical causes that are static, pastorless, and in some cases governed by individuals who would prefer church decease rather than reformation. The shrinkage continues, appalling standards of preaching are often reported, ignorance prevails, manpower and gifts are neglected, pastoral oversight is almost nil, errors grow like weeds and fill the minds of believers. Correction is resented. And so the march of death continues, just as it has done with countless independent Strict Baptist churches all over the country.

In the meantime many join the Restoration movement as they have never received a grounding in the truth to give them theological maturity and stability. Little wonder that the evangelical cause in Britain, in spite of the encouragements of the Reformed movement, continues to decline numerically.

If isolationism is to continue unchecked what does it mean? The answer is we cannot effectively train men, we cannot plant churches, we cannot organise missionary ventures, we cannot evangelise the world. Even though the church I lead is larger than most independent churches there is no conceivable way that we could undertake the works just referred to on our own. A further problem with isolationism is that there is no discipline for ministers who disgrace the Gospel of Christ. Occasionally the Press reports dreadful instances of ministers being guilty of appalling immorality. Even the Church of England is able to exercise some discipline in the rejection of ministers guilty of criminal offences, but in the case of independent churches with no connections there is not the remotest possibility of showing that there is discipline in the Church of Christ. If we are to think in terms of unity or association how close should that unity be? According to the prayer of our Lord the answer is, as close as possible! That is as close as the Trinity is close.



B. Sunath Kumar, of Andra Pradesh, India, is studying at the London Theological Seminary. He has plans to start a Bible college in his province. He is seen talking here with Donald MacLeod.

The unity of like-minded churches

But there is no way that churches can be united closely if they are at variance on major issues. But what if they are united on major issues? How close should they be? Again the answer is, as close as possible.

Concerning closer unity of like-minded churches in England, some time ago I suggested that the Carey Conference should combine for one year at least with the Grace Assembly. The latter grouping represents a hybrid of Strict Baptist traditionalism together with Reformed Baptist emphases. Through persevering efforts Grace Assembly has grown to become an annual two-day assembly representing a mixture of Strict Baptist churches some of which have been handicapped by stifling traditionalism. Progress has been substantial. Hyper-Calvinism has been the bane of many Strict Baptist churches some of which are securely locked in that prison. A few have been liberated. These comments are not made in a critical spirit. For a decade or more I was personally involved with many others in work which led eventually to what is now Grace Assembly. The whole point in the context of this editorial is to encourage more unity. Also to be encouraged as much as possible is the work of Grace Baptist Mission which has made great strides in recent years. The American counterpart, The Reformed Baptist Mission, with David Straub as secretary, is newly born by comparison but calls for our interest and concern.

As far as the promotion of a clear Reformed Baptist thrust is concerned together with a robust emphasis on unity, the testimony represented by the International Baptist Conference, held every second year at Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, should evoke our deep gratitude. The work of church planting in mission situations stimulated by the seminary and church at Jarvis Street has been tremendous. I have confined observations to expressions of corporate unity. It is not possible to make reference to individual churches and their contribution to unity on the broader front.

Reformed Baptist Churches International

Apart from the references to Toronto and Grace Mission the above observations concern churches of like mind in various localities where close cooperation is practical. What about unity on a wider front? As never before we are encouraged today to think in global terms. So what practical conclusion do we come to for the increasing number of Reformed Baptist churches round the world? Surely we need to promote the unity that we already enjoy because of our common beliefs and experiences. We need to be associated together. We already are by correspondence, but we must work together more by sharing information, by praying intelligently, by supporting mutual missionary interests, by interchange of preachers, and by financial support.

To be practical let us take just one country and the month of January 1987. The country is one of the two most controversial in the world, South Africa. (The other is Israel.) Before coming to the example, some comments on unity as it is needed in South Africa and Israel. The propaganda of the mass media says that we must not have anything to do with South Africa. We must not do business with that Pariah. We must not play cricket with that people, and we must not eat the apricot jam that they export! However Christians are to rise above all walls of division whether made by governments or by political parties seeking to make capital for themselves out of the plight of others. The law of our Lord says that all believers are to bear one another's burdens. They are to love one another fervently. They are to be seen as one so that the world might see that here is a love which transcends the earthly and thus be brought to believe. We are to be one united body of believers, irrespective of our nationality or pigment of skin, or language or culture. That means that Hebrew believers and Arab believers are united by bonds which are eternal and which infinitely outweigh all other considerations. Likewise in South Africa it is imperative that the love of Christ be expressed in such a way as to make nonsense of apartheid.

Now to come directly to our example of the need to increase our unity. Those who know South Africa will remember that one of the most accentuated polarities is that which has come to exist historically between the Zulus (the most famous and numerous of the indigenous peoples), and the Afrikaners. During January this year we learned that financial support is needed to enable the Afrikaans Baptists to print the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith in Afrikaans. The Afrikaans Baptist churches have been embracing the doctrines of grace and need literature to further their cause. At the same time the first Zulu Reformed Baptist church has been formed in Natal with 65 members. This has come about because it appears that the Arminian Baptist Union of Natal is ignorant of Baptist history to such an extent that the Zulus have sailed right past them in their knowledge of the truth and love of the Reformed theology of our forefathers. Since the Baptist Union have been intolerant (untypical in most instances up to now), the Zulus have seen the need to publish the 1689 Confession in their unusually beautiful language. Their need for help to publish the Confession is even more acute. On behalf of our readers we are requesting that *Reformation Today* in South Africa share some of their funds to support the

two printing ventures just described, especially the Zulu one as sanctions against South Africa hurt them and their need will be greater.

What is the difference between a 'pastor' and an overseeing elder?

The question of church government discussed at the Carey Conference highlighted the need for further materials on the subject. A well documented history of what groups of churches and denominations have done in the past will be valuable. It should be noted that when there are church assemblies or conferences that it is the full-timers or 'pastors' who attend as the leaders of the churches.

This raises the question, What is the difference between a pastor or full-time preaching elder, and an overseeing elder? Doctor Martyn Lloyd-Jones led a fraternal in London which was *strictly* confined to full-time pastors. This tradition was not perpetuated without good reason. The doctor used to say that only those who were in pastoral office could understand the peculiar stresses and problems being discussed. Of course that was not the only reason. The good reasons urgently require re-assertion and biblical support.

There are differences between those called to devote their lives to the ministry of preaching and those who are not. The ground of the vocation of a pastor has a relation to God himself, to that pastor's own conscience, to the people he serves, and to those who bear office in the church (*ibid.,* Thornwell, p. 24). The call is to devote oneself fully to the work of the ministry. What is the difference in authority between the full-time pastor and the overseeing elders? In the government of the local church there is parity or equality, but this equality does not apply to gifts and abilities. The function of a man who is devoting his whole time to the work of preaching and leading the flock is different to that of the overseeing elders who help and assist. This is recognised universally by the unbelieving world. It is obvious to everyone that the full-time minister has a specific role to fulfil. Therefore it is misleading for a church to give the impression that all the elders are the same. Obviously there are exceptions but as a general rule each church has a leader who functions as such.

Since the first issue of this magazine 75 pages have been devoted to the subject of eldership. The main burden was to recover the role and function of the eldership, but too little attention has been given to the subject of the call which constitutes the pastoral office within the eldership. In *R.T.* 69, p. 17, a small but inedequate effort was made to point to the necessity for flexibility and for full room to be made for the leadership role of the pastor, or pastors. 1 Timothy 5:17 is a key statement. How much weight can be put upon it has been a matter of lengthy debate.

Again exposition bringing more light leading to discussion is urgently needed. My last editorial 'How can we be better preachers', was devoted to reviewing the new book *Preaching* (460 pp. Pres and Ref for the U.S.A., and E.P. in the U.K.). That volume includes an excellent chapter on 'The Minister's Call'. Moreover the contents of the book considered as a whole illustrate that the demands of

the ministry are so great that a call to full-time work is essential. God has always made provision for that.

Pseudo-Science and Theistic Evolution

Toward the end of 1986, TV (BBC 1) viewers in Britain were treated to a series of films with the title 'Life on Earth'. Magnificent nature-film photography characterised the series presented by the well known David Attenborough. The last film, the climax to the series, lasted about 50 minutes. It represented the present popular idea of the evolution of man. The series used pseudo-science to convey the impression that biological evolution is the truth and nothing but the truth.

The material was presented as though the producer, David Attenborough, had been present throughout the earth's history as a personal observer of what took place! To have such an eye-witness is extraordinary, to say the least, so what happened? What are the secrets of the development of life on earth?

The description of how the change came is about to be retold. The present condition of advanced 'animals' like you and me began with a handsome species of monkey called the vervet. This tribe is found in Africa. One day a group of vervet decided to turn themselves into chimpanzees. This decision occurred because those vervet monkeys were severely inconvenienced by having to stand on their back legs. Their joints ached because they had incessantly to stretch up to watch for their dreaded enemy, the leopard. How these elegant monkeys with their smooth grey coats and long tails came into existence in the first place we were not informed. Anyway at their committee meeting they opted to get rid of their tails and start on the road to become chimpanzees. We should note that only one group decided on this action. The rest remained in ignorance and continue to form a staple diet for leopards to this day. We would think that such persecution would prompt those who remain to change just as their brothers have done. For some mysterious reason that flash of genius has evaded them.

Once the single elect band of vervet monkeys had changed to become chimps they found that their ability at communication was even greater than it had been before. Thus some of them gathered together for another committee meeting. It was unanimously decided that they should evolve further and become homo-sapiens, that is modern man. We must note well that only some of them decided this. The rest have remained chimps to this day. These chimps are favourites in our zoos. You can easily see for yourself that they are good at communication, but again for some strange reason it has never struck the remaining ones that they too should change into homo-sapiens. Why they have been so slow we cannot know. The evidence, by way of skeletal remains, to prove the change from chimps to man is scarcely existent, but David Attenborough did show us a skull which he admitted was reconstructed to a considerable degree. It appeared to be mostly reconstructed to me, but then who am I to question those who study skulls?

There are experts who believe that the skull evidence is totally unsatisfactory. There are also specialists who reckon that the fossil record contradicts the popular mythology about evolution. When we reflect on Attenborough's account we wonder whether he should not be recognised along with Aesop as a masterful fable maker.

Christians should be encouraged to see that there is no need to compromise the biblical account. Furthermore they should be urged to reject the idea of theistic evolution. Prof Edgar Andrews in his book, *Christ and the Cosmos* (128 pp, E.P. £3.95) demonstrates that theistic evolution is at loggerheads with the biblical account at every point. We must realise that there is nothing scientific about the evolutionary hypothesis. This also is shown by Prof. Andrews. We urge our readers to study the above book and also his work, *God, Science and Evolution* which contains a chapter on the age of the earth, (128 pp, E.P.). These reliable studies deserve a wide circulation and should be in every library including our own local public libraries.

The article by David Tyler deals with an important aspect related to this controversy. Biological evolution and Darwinism are discounted by scientists who deal with proven facts. The real scientists are those who insist on evidence and proof. In order to establish the hypothesis of evolution today there is a feverish search for skulls. If evolution is true then the earth should be full of evidence demonstrating every stage of transition for all the species. So numerous would these changes be that we should have enough skulls for us all to have a glass case full of our own. As it is, anything that remotely represents an unusual skull receives inordinate attention. If you find one when you are digging in your back yard, hold on to it. If it looks ape-like it might be worth ten thousand times its weight in gold and become the centrepiece for the next BBC programme!

Opposition to the myth of evolution is not popular. I sent a review of the last Attenborough programme to seven secular papers and five evangelical papers. Not one showed any interest. If it was too long, too sarcastic, too this, or too that, I was ready to alter and oblige. But the fact of the matter is that there is no heart for the subject, and evangelicals are very unsure of themselves. Evolution today is like Nebuchadnezzar's image of gold, ninety feet above contradiction. Before this image and idol all the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, officials, and liberal theologians bow down. When the music plays they all fall on their faces.

The scourge of AIDS

The philosophy of evolutionary humanism as an ethical base has replaced the moral guidance provided by the Bible. This is what led Francis Schaeffer to describe our time as a post-Christian culture. It is not surprising therefore that in combating the disease of Aids the Government in its campaign has avoided dealing with the real cause of the disease, the moral cause. Rather it has given

directions as to how sinners can continue in their diabolical practices more safely. Much material has appeared but it is hard to find anything which actually explains the medical facts plainly. We are thankful for the clarity and brevity of Andrew Taylor's article. Dr Taylor stresses that his material is consistent with medical knowledge only up to January 1987.

The statistics for death from Aids in Britain for January showed an alarming increase. The infection caused by blood transfusion to haemophiliacs has been cut back. Now that that has been achieved it is significant that the percentage of mortalities due to homosexuality or bisexuality is almost 90 percent. Surely this points us to Romans 1:26,27. Paul condemns lesbianism and homosexuality. He declares that this is the sin that characterises reprobates. A reprobate is one who has been given up by God. Persistent and obstinate rejection of the truth is the cause of reprobation. The fact that some homosexuals at Corinth became Christians warns against categorical judgments in this matter. The teaching in Romans 1 is general and does not necessarily mean that every single homosexual is a reprobate. (Dr. Andrew Taylor concludes his article with a call for compassion. The disease can be used to bring sufferers to repentance.) However, generally speaking, according to Romans 1, we are to regard homosexuality as the sin which characterises reprobates. That certainly was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah. In Leviticus (20:13) the death penalty was prescribed for homosexuals. The sin is described as 'detestable' (Lev 18:22). Paul implies that a dreadful unnatural lust is involved which cannot be satisfied because *it is unnatural* (Rom 1:27). This may well explain the horrific descriptions of what happened at Sodom (Gen 19:4-9), and at Gibeah (Jud 19:16-30).

The practical implications of Aids for society are many. For instance we have yet to assess to what extent this disease will be a damper upon the campaign 'To promote Gay and Lesbian rights, welcoming lesbians and gays as adoptive parents and foster parents'. We do know that the power and wealth of the city of San Francisco to vaunt and promote homosexuality as a normal way of life has already been crippled. Potential centres of propagation of homosexual propaganda have been turned into hospices for the dying (*The Times* January 19th, 1987).

In some ways Aids is akin to leprosy as it leads to the isolation and rejection of its victims. One doctor (Eric Mackay) has pointed to the providence of God in allowing the development of this virus. It belongs to God's power to modify that virus and curb its virulent capacity. Until such a time, or the discovery of a cure, the prospects are grim. In 1918-1919 at least 20 million died of a virus in an epidemic called Spanish flu. One writer (Dr. James McKeever) of the U.S.A. maintains, 'it is our best forecast that, within 12 years, 20 to 25 percent of the population of the U.S.A. will die or be dying of Aids'. (*The Aids Plague,* Omega Publications, P.O. Box 4130, Medford, OR 97501.)

The Tyranny of Experience Seeking

by M. Tony Ludlow

For several years during the early days of my Christian pilgrimage I was taught by good and godly men that it was necessary for me to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This was the instruction found in many Southern Baptist churches in the mid-1970s. The teaching was usually an adaptation of a model popularised by the copyrighted material of Bill Bright in a booklet entitled *How to be filled with the Spirit* and in his two tracts 'The Four Spiritual Laws' and 'Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?' Though many modifications of this type of teaching could be found and were being taught by a multitude of teachers, the basic principles were consistent. I was told that this experience would empower me for meeting all of the demands and responsibilities of progressive sanctification. They said it would solve my spiritual problems and make me a 'successful' witness. In essence, the filling would do what conversion seemed, unable to accomplish. It would increase the speed, eliminate the struggle, and reduce the time involved in the process of Christian growth. I could now cross the ocean of spiritual maturity in the supersonic *Concorde* instead of the *Mayflower* style sail boat in which I was travelling.

'*How* was I supposed to be filled with the Holy Spirit?' I asked. Several answers were provided by different teachers. Most would conclude that you must confess all of your sins and ask God to fill you. I was told that this must be done every day because the 'filling' would not last. As one person said, 'You must be filled several times each day because you will "leak".' One man said the filling was like a balloon being blown up. Each time I confessed and asked for the filling I could reduce the 'leading' effect and even add to the size of the 'balloon' with more 'air'.

Without question the New Testament records thirteen experiences of individuals who were filled with the Holy Spirit. My teachers told me Ephesians 5:18 was the command to be likewise filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore the teaching appeared to have been built upon a solid biblical foundation. Godly men were teaching me to seek an experience that is recorded and commanded in the Bible. What's more, these men had experiences of their own that were presented as proofs of their theology. I could hardly wait to be filled with the Holy Spirit too!

Unfortunately, disappointment came when *I* tried to be Spirit-filled. I obeyed the teaching but nothing happened. I did not feel any different after I earnestly confessed my sins and asked for the filling. Some teachers told me that I must not rely on feelings, just *believe* that the filling has taken place. Other teachers said that feelings and manifestations of the Spirit were absolutely necessary. Well – was I filled or not? I still had problems and I still seemed to lack the power and experience that the teachers possessed, so I concluded that I must not be filled. This pattern of earnest desire and subsequent disappointment and confusion repeated itself each time I attempted it.

I became frustrated by those who told me to just believe I was Spirit-filled even though I did not feel anything. I reasoned that an essential experience at the least should result in *something.* This frustration led me to a church that maintained that there were definite manifestations of the spirit-filled experience that were observable and equally mystical. I never left the Southern Baptist Convention, yet I sought answers from these other denominations, attending their services, and acquiescing to many of their doctrinal positions. Regretfully, two years of this kind of searching produced no answers. The charismatic experience which I sought to validate a filling never came.

These struggles occurred ten years ago. Today I am a committed Southern Baptist pastor. Though I have a love and admiration for my former teachers, I do not endorse their views of the Spirit-filled experience. Let me explain why I do not believe this teaching/experience is founded on sound biblical exegesis and theology.

First, a careful examination of those individuals in the Bible who were filled with the Holy Spirit does not support or provide a method, a formula, or a process by which those experiences can or should be duplicated. Each experience was sudden and marked by power, effectiveness and boldness in speaking. (The one possible exception might be John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb! His ministry was, however, one of loneliness, prayer and suffering.) None of these fillings are associated with a prayer for the filling, a confession of sin, victory over remaining sin, or control of the Holy Spirit in practical daily living. Additionally, there are no instructions given subsequent to these fillings that teaches the believer *how* to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At the least, an essential teaching would be accompanied by essential instructions regarding the 'how to'.

Second, there is neither a 'happy' experience nor a 'crisis' experience following conversion that is taught, promised, or commanded in Holy Scripture that answers to all of the demands and responsibilities of progressive sanctification and personal holiness. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of 'theologising' around the experiences of the filling preachers and teachers. These experiences are then taught as patterns for spiritual growth and maturity. Each man uses his own experience to determine theology. Misinterpretation results when *experience* is used as a pattern for understanding, interpreting, or teaching theology. Southern Baptist pastors and teachers who would reject the speculations of the charismatic movement commit the same errors of the movement by exalting their own experiences. Those who do so confuse their people and, in fact, promote the neo-charismatic movement found in so many SBC churches today. The damage is seen in an exodus of searching, but perplexed, Christians from SBC churches to charismatic and pentecostal denominations and fellowships.

Third, the teaching of Ephesians 5:18 as the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit is at best semantic confusion and at worst theological make-believe. Grammatically, the construction of the verse does not lend itself to the theology that has been built around it. Textually, the verse does not support the command to duplicate an experience. Exegetically, middle or passive voice imperatives are used in the verse without the definite article 'the' or the word 'holy'. This allows for a variety of possible translations including 'be ye being filled in spirit'. Careful Greek

exegesis will reveal that the text has a variety of possible renderings and interpretations including the feasibility that 'spirit' refers to the human spirit which is controlled or ministered to by following the instructions given in Ephesians 5:19. The parallel passage, Colossians 3:16, says nothing of the Holy Spirit. Contextually, nothing is mentioned in or around Ephesians 5:18 regarding prayers for filling, victory over sin, or any of the other supposed benefits that 'filling' teachers promote. It is remarkable that a verse with so many questions surrounding it could occupy a prominent place in any system of doctrine, yet it stands alone as the single most important text used to prove the necessity of 'filling' theology. It has been well said that, 'if you have only one scripture on which to base an important doctrine you are most likely to find, on close examination, that you have none'. When Ephesians 5:18 is removed from this theological house of cards the entire teaching falls.

Fourth, the teaching of passive mystical experiences that give the believer victory over sin, transform his prayers and witnessing, while filling him with supernatural love and power, borders on evangelical antinomianism. A passion for holiness, a desire to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and an aggressive application of the principles of the Christian life are lacking in most of these teachings. Instead, these 'filling' preachers offer an experience as a solution to the problems of progressive sanctification. Couched within this framework of doctrine is the unscriptural teaching that a person can have Jesus as Saviour, but reject him as Lord. Once again, the 'filling' enthrones Christ as Lord and cures this problem.

Fifth, the 'filling' doctrine walks hand in hand with the so called 'carnal Christian'. Pastor Ernest Reisinger has written an excellent treatise on the error of this model in his booklet *What Should We think of the Carnal Christian?* available through the Banner of Truth Trust. It appears conclusive that the 'carnal Christian' does not exist as many have taught. The Bible never describes a born again believer *dominated* by carnality. Jesus' parable of the sower does not teach a carnal Christian doctrine. Paul did not teach it when he rebuked those at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3. Their error was a failure to attain to certain levels of maturity in *one* area of their Christian walk. After his rebuke, Paul did not tell the Corinthian believers to get filled with the Holy Spirit in order to correct their behaviour.

In Romans 7 and 8 Paul uses two different forms of the same word *sarx* that has been translated 'carnal'. In Romans 7:14 the form of the word *sarkinos* means that he admits to being made of flesh, but in Romans 8:6-9 the form of the word *sarkos* describes the totality of life and philosophy demonstrated by the unregenerate. Additionally, Paul did not teach the Christians at Rome a series of steps or a formula whereby they could get filled with the Holy Spirit and eliminate all of the agonising associated with remaining sin found in Romans 7. Pastor Reisinger refutes the carnal Christian teaching in a very sound and scholarly fashion consulting the works of Matthew Henry, John Gill and John Calvin, as well as Charles Hodge, J. P. Boyce (systematic theologian and founder of the first Southern Baptist Seminary), Robert L. Dabney and J. H. Thornwell.

Sixth, the doctrine of Spirit-filling and other concepts associated with the 'higher life' or 'deeper life' movements seem to oppose orthodox soteriology. Conversion is emphasised and evangelism is promoted in most of these

circles, but the presentation of the gospel is man-centred and 'decision' oriented. The holiness and glory of God, the evil of sin, and the necessity of repentance and faith are but a few of the essential elements of the gospel that are lacking in much of these 'higher life' theories. The results can be seen in the frustrations of these teachers when their 'converts' do not demonstrate the attributes of saving grace. This frustration leads them to concoct a variety of theological mutations intended to produce the desired Christian lifestyle. These teachers relegate such believers to the 'carnal Christian hospital' where they attempt to administer sub-biblical antidotes to an illness that has been wrongly diagnosed. The only antidote these 'carnal Christians' need is a healthy dose of Holy Spirit regeneration wrought by a true presentation of the Gospel. Charles Haddon Spurgeon stated the case quite well when he warned his students:

> If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumption, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Do not suppose that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to the worldlings and telling them they may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their Saviour, while they are wedded to their idols, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so I tell them a lie, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.[1]

Seventh, the doctrine of Spirit-filling does great damage to the doctrine of perseverance. The notion that believers can take some time off for a prolonged season of carnal *domination* is without biblical support. If acceptance is given to the idea that it is necessary to have Spirit-filling experiences each day, will it be long before evangelicals will propose that new salvation experiences will be necessary each day? How could this error be accepted in light of the 'filling' doctrine? Eventually the question will be asked, 'What sin is committed subsequent to the last filling that results in a need for a new filling?' This question receives a multitude of answers that invariably give rise to a 'degree of sin' concept that Arminianism seeks to address. If a certain sin can cause us to lose our 'filling' then perhaps it is possible for a certain sin to eliminate our salvation.

How should we then live? Many might think that I do not believe in the Holy Spirit or confession of sin. Some might think that I do not believe in being yielded and controlled by the Holy Spirit or that I do not experience the abundant life in Christ. Therefore, let me say that I believe in the complete and absolute dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God. He must be operative in the life of every believer in order to experience progress in personal holiness. Without him we can do nothing.

However, the problems and demands of the Christian life are not answered by 'letting go and letting God'. The Bible describes our advancement in sanctification with words that involve action. Words like trusting, praying, wrestling, fighting, running, walking, and agonising are but a few of the terms used to characterise the believers' progress in Christ. When Paul told the Christians at Ephesus to put on the whole armour of God it is assumed they were entering into battle to engage in hand to hand combat. They were not going for a rest.

We must daily confess sin and be led by the Spirit, not as a means to an experience, but as a result of obedience to the general directives of Holy Scripture. We must bring all of our redeemed faculties

The following article is taken from a paper produced for members of the Leeds Reformed Baptist Church, to aid in thinking through the whole subject of giving and of expanding the church's ministry. Full biblical quotations have had to be deleted, but it is hoped that readers will have their Bibles open and look up references, to gain full benefit from this study. This exposition based on the Old Testament forms Part 1. It is to be followed by an exposition on the subject of tithing or giving from the New Testament.

Principles of Christian Giving

Peter Parkinson

Introduction

It is an indisputable fact that innumerable churches are faced with the problem of a lack of finance. There are ministries which local churches are unable to sponsor because of financial restrictions. Many pastors face severe difficulties because the income of the churches where they minister is insufficient for them to be paid an adequate salary. Very few pastors are adequately remunerated and financially provided for; most are expected to exist on substantially less than the average church member, whilst at the same time incurring substantially greater living costs and expenses, due to the very nature of their calling, (the cost of books and literature, hospitality, travel, high telephone bills, the administrative costs of an office with light and heating bills.) Few people, other than those in full-time service, are aware of the considerable expenses which some ministries incur.

There are many areas of Christian work into which churches are unable to enter, and when we consider the breadth of ministry that the church has encompassed in the past, we realise how little we are doing today. Consider, for example, the enterprise of Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle; church planting work, the Stockwell Orphanage, colportage work, the College with all its peculiar needs, the rebuilding of the Old People's Home, and especially the tremendous administrative costs of the Tabernacle premises which was used by sixty different organisations, and was open from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. every day of the week.

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to bear on the pursuit of holiness. We must be consumed by the Word of God that we might be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We must weigh every teaching in the light of sound biblical hermeneutics that we might not believe or teach error or exalt experience above revealed truth. We must trust in the *whole* counsel of God and not in one single and isolated verse coloured by the vivid imaginations of a few teachers. God help us to 'rightly divide the word of truth'.

Notes

[1] Charles Haddon Spurgeon, quoted in *What Should We Think of the Carnal Christian,* Ernest C. Reisinger, Great Britain: Banner of Truth, p. 20.

It is essential that we look at the whole subject of giving, not only in order that our ministers be properly provided for, but also that our churches' potential ministry should not be hampered through insufficient income.

The purpose of this study is to consider whether we are, or are not, conducting ourselves, as churches or individuals, in a manner consistent with biblical principles. We will now examine Old Testament practice. As we do so I am fully aware of the objection that we are no longer under law but under grace. . . . As E. F. Kevan has demonstrated in his book *The Grace of Law* God's grace was exhibited within the framework of the law. God's people were delivered from lawlessness and given the provision of law together with its Levitical institutions. In order to administrate the latter, tithing was instituted. The question which we need to face throughout our study is this: If the LORD required giving of this order in the Old Covenant administration how much more does he require generous giving (tithing as a minimum) in the New Covenant administration, in which the Church is required to fill the whole earth with the truth (Matt 28:16-20).

Part 1: OLD TESTAMENT PRACTICE

1. The Patriarchs

Abraham's Tithe — Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-10

The first reference to tithing in the Old Testament is to be found in the account of the strange figure of Melchizedek in his encounter with Abraham. The Hebrews passage is not principally dealing with the question of tithing; rather the writer is showing the superiority of Christ to those who have gone before and likening the person of Christ to that of Melchizedek, describing him as, 'One without beginning of days or end of life, without father or mother.' This extraordinary figure, Melchizedek, seems in the Old Testament to appear as if from nowhere and then to simply disappear again. However, the writer specifically says that the patriarch Abraham was responsible to give to this priest of God (Melchizedek) one tenth of his plunder (v. 4). He refers to the Law (v. 5) whereby the descendants of Levi who become priests are to collect a tenth from the people. What we see here in Genesis is that the principle of tithing is already established and is being practised in these patriarchal times, even before the Levitical Law is given.

Jacob's Vow — Genesis 28:20-22

This fact is further illustrated by the vow of Jacob. Even here, in this early passage, we see the principle being clearly outworked, that the response of a believing and appreciative heart to the goodness and provision of God, is the tithing of one's income to the Lord. It would be helpful at this point, to comment on the actual word which is used in the Old Testament for 'tithe'. The Hebrew word is *ma-aser* — the term literally meaning a tenth part. There has been some debate as to the significance of the term 'tithe', but there is no mistaking its literal meaning. To speak of 'tithing a third' would be a contradic-

There are few subjects on which the Lord's own people are more astray than on the subject of giving. They profess to take the Bible as their own rule of faith and practice, and yet in the matter of Christian finance, the vast majority have utterly ignored its plain teachings and have tried every substitute the carnal mind could devise; therefore it is no wonder that the majority of Christian enterprises in the world today are handicapped and crippled through the lack of funds. Is our giving to be regulated by sentiment and impulse, or by principle and conscience? That is only another way of asking, Does God leave us to the spirit of gratitude and generosity, or has he definitely specified his own mind and particularized what portion of his gifts to us are due to him in return? Surely God has not left this important matter without fully making known his will! The Bible is given to be a lamp unto our feet and therefore he cannot have left us in darkness regarding any obligation or privilege in our dealings with him or his with us.

A. W. Pink.

tion in terms. The tithe is a tenth, so to tithe simply means to separate one tenth of one's property, possessions or income, as God prospers us (Prov 3:9, 10).

The Mosaic Law

(a) Tithing established – Leviticus 27:30-33

When we come to the book of Leviticus, we find the principle of tithing is developed in great detail. Here we have a specific reference to the responsibility of God's people to tithe their income to the Lord.

It is interesting to note that the way in which the tithing is to be undertaken is indiscriminate. The giver is not allowed to choose what tenth he will give, but the tenth must be representative of his actual possessions or income. Hence it is specifically stated that every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod will be holy to the Lord. Clearly what is envisaged is that in the case of a shepherd, all his sheep will be assembled, they will be filed past and every tenth sheep taken out. The Law thus prevented unscrupulous persons from selecting inferior animals to give to the priest, whilst keeping the best animals for himself. (One could imagine some rogues sending the priests the diseased, lame and useless sheep which were unfit for human consumption!)

Supporting the Ministry: (Use of the Tithe) – Leviticus 18:21-24. Here we have an explicit biblical command as to how the tithes are to be used. The tithe is intended for the support of the Levites and the priests. It is not to be used for any other purpose than for the support of the 'ministry', that is the Levites and the priests. This principle, as we shall consider later, has far reaching implications for us.

Tithing the Tithes – Numbers 18:25-32. What the Levites were instructed to do is quite clear. They were to tithe the tithes that they received and they were to give the *best* of what they received. So, if they had received ten sheep, the one that was to be set aside by the priest was to be the best.

The Levites were not themselves excluded from tithing. Though the tithe they had received had been specifically given for their support, they in turn were required to tithe their total income to the house of God and to give that to the priest for use in God's house. The Levites and priests were called upon to set an example in tithing and to maintain a higher standard in their giving than was expected of the rest of Israel. They were thus to lead by example, not merely by exhortation.

God's Portion – Deuteronomy 26:12-15. Once more, the principle of tithing is clearly stated, and is spoken of as 'the sacred portion', in other words, a portion set aside for God. The assumption is that one tenth of a person's possessions is not to be regarded as his own, but as actually belonging to the Lord. Withholding that tithe is withholding that which is truly and rightly God's, that to which the individual has no right of access or usage.

Another very important principle is introduced here in chapter 26:12, this being the principle that every third year, the tithe should be given to the Levites, the alien, the fatherless and the widows.

Israel's attention is being directed here to the needs of those who are easily forgotten; so, every third year, the tithe is not simply taken to the temple or to the tabernacle and presented as an offering to the Lord, but that tithe in its totality is given to the Levites and to the needy who are in one's own towns and with whom one is confronted day by day. Hence the priesthood was to be fully supported but the needs of God's people were not to be ignored.

Reforms and Revivals in the Old Testament

Hezekiah – 2 Chronicles 31

Much can be learnt by studying examples of revivals which occurred in Old Testament times. The whole chapter describes the account of Hezekiah reintroducing tithing, and is very important indeed, for it tells of the re-instating of true religion.

The situation is plain, namely, that tithing had fallen into decline, because of the degeneracy of the spiritual life of Israel. Thus the priests were not being adequately supported and were not able to give themselves to the work of the ministry. In order to re-instate true religion, Hezekiah recognises the need to reintroduce the tithing principle.

So what do we have here? A picture of the people of God, in true repentance, turning to their Maker; the evidence of that true repentance is their willingness to begin tithing again. Note that the direct and immediate beneficiaries of the tithes were the priests, those responsible for the spiritual welfare of the nation.

In response to this, we read in verse 11 and following that Hezekiah ordered store rooms to be built, and the contributions that had been given and dedicated to the Lord were brought to those store rooms and we read that the Levites were appointed 'to faithfully distribute to their fellow priests' (v. 15) from the booty of those store houses. An important principle emerges, namely, that the ministers of God who are more than adequately provided for, have a solemn responsibility to undertake for the care and sustenance of those who are less adequately supported.

Nehemiah – Nehemiah 10-13

Chapter 10 describes Nehemiah seeking to restore true faith in Israel. In verse 32 we see the priests recognising their call and their responsibility to be faithful in ministering to the people of God and in verse 39 we see that the tithes and offerings are to be brought to the priests, in obedience to God's Law. The stirring words of commitment, 'we will not neglect the house of our God' testify to Israel's readiness to support the ministers of God, and to their sincere desire to walk in godliness, uprightness and holiness before the Lord.

In 12:44 we read that Judah was pleased with the Levites and the priests. It is because the priests and Levites were faithful that they were deserving of support. There is a vitally important principle here, for which we find a direct parallel in Paul's letter to Timothy. It was precisely because the priests and Levites were faithful and because Judah was pleased with that ministry, that the generous support was to be maintained and encouraged (1 Tim 5:17).

It is to the faithful ministers of the gospel that generous support is to be given. We have no mandate to be generous in our support of those who are not faithful in gospel ministry.

In Nehemiah 13:10 we discover that soon the principle of tithing declined and the priests and Levites were not adequately provided for. The result of the inadequacy of their provision was that they had to turn to private means to ensure that they had the necessary income for the support of God's house.

I think it is very interesting for us to note at this point, just how many ministers of the gospel, throughout history, have had to resort to external means of support when the church has not provided for them adequately and when the biblical means of tithing have been neglected. See, for instance, Paul's testimony of his own and Barnabas' ministry; they supported themselves at their own expense time and again (1 Cor 9). Yet on the other hand when he was chained to a Roman soldier in Rome, living in his own rented home, facing considerable administrative costs, the Philippian church sent a generous financial gift to support him, which came by Epaphroditus (Phil 2:19-30 and 4:18).

Malachi

Turning to Malachi, one's heart cannot fail to be stirred by the inspiring passages to be found here. The language used though is devastatingly blunt. God speaks of those who are failing to tithe as 'robbing' him (Mal 3:8). To

At the Carey Conference, Don Garlington (left) chatting with David Kingdon.

contemplate being guilty of such a sin is dreadful, yet God is here declaring that those who fail to tithe are guilty of nothing less than robbing God of that which is truly his.

Chapter 2, interestingly, contains an admonition for the priests and chapter 3 speaks of the purifying of the priesthood. What God is saying is that before blessing will come to his house and before reformation and revival will be known by his people, there must be a revival and reformation among the priesthood, that is the ministers of the gospel. We cannot overestimate, in this context, the importance of a faithful gospel ministry.

It is noteworthy that God's people are promised that as they tithe, so they shall be blessed. They tithe that they may expect material blessings (3:10-12). We may be tempted to think that this would lead to wrong motives but lying at the heart of the matter is a right relationship to Jahweh. If that relationship is right, reflected by our faithful giving, he will prosper us (Prov 3:9, 10). This is not an inviolable rule, but a general principle proven generation after generation.

The New Testament

In part 2 I wish to explore the NT witness concerning tithing. We must avoid the great error of neglecting the unity of the two testaments. The covenant of promise is fulfilled by the covenant of fulfilment. The Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system falls away. The ministry established by our Lord Jesus Christ takes the place of the Old (Eph 4). This ministry requires support. I maintain that the principles of giving in the OT were spiritual and abiding. The methods of giving may change, but the principles do not change. Abraham and Jacob, before the coming of the Law, were constrained to tithe. That principle did not come to them as a legal enactment. They tithed out of the love and gratitude of their hearts. Thus I maintain that in this NT era our giving should not be less inspired and effective than in the OT, but more so!

To be continued.

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My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart for ever; fasten them around your neck. When you walk they will guide you; when you sleep they will watch over you; when you awake they will speak to you. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way of life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no-one who touches her will go unpunished (Prov 6:20-29).

Adultery in the Church: A Preventive Approach

by Ray Stephens

My friends in the medical world tell me that their profession is in the throes of a revolution. The focus of medical concern is shifting from cure to *prevention.* Hence the massive emphasis on health education which is increasingly a feature of our society. Doctors are realising that it is not enough to remedy disease when it has developed. Their role is also to recognise the patterns of behaviour that give rise to ill-health and to correct them before the problems arise.

We need to see a similar shift in our understanding of the purpose of preaching. We recognise that the preaching of Scripture has a *corrective* function: it is directed towards the sins that are already manifest in our lives. It exposes those sins. It reproves them and it corrects us. But preaching should also have a preventive function. As in the passage from Proverbs quoted above, the concern of the writers of Scripture is not only to reprove sin but also to guard their hearers against sin.

Nowhere is this more true than in the area of sexual ethics. We are horrified when moral failure surfaces in our churches. But we should not be surprised. How many sermons have you heard teaching Christians how to guard themselves against adultery? All the sermons I hear on the seventh commandment have the same aim. They are intended to show the hearers that if they have not outwardly broken the commandment, they have done so inwardly. That is the legitimate aim. But it is not the only aim of God's law. The law was not only given to convict us of sin: it was also given to guard us against sin.

We are living through a moral earthquake and it is shaking our churches. The most experienced and apparently mature Christians are not exempt from its effects. Never a month goes by without news of one more evangelical pastor whose ministry has come to a tragic end due to moral failure (this is *not* an exaggeration: editor). Once adultery within the church was almost unknown; now it is commonplace.

Many Christians are bewildered. In this article, I want to consider two questions. *Firstly* we ask 'How can it be prevented?'

Why do Christians Commit Adultery?

There is no single answer. No two cases are

identical. But there are certain common factors.

1. The world's thinking

Christians commit adultery because they have already been tainted by the world's thinking. Unconsciously, they have come to accept the world's outlook. That is Solomon's emphasis in the passage we have quoted. He is certain that moral sin begins in the *mind.* The writer of Psalm 1 would agree. Before a man is found standing in the way of sinners, he has first been walking in the counsel of the ungodly. His mind should have been shaped by meditation on the law of the Lord. Instead, he has absorbed the thinking of the world. Whether it has infiltrated through the media or through his circle of acquaintance makes no difference. The citadel of his mind has fallen. The capture of the city is only a matter of time.

We are all being conditioned to accept the assumptions of the world around us. It is when we recognise those assumptions and bring the Word of God to bear on them that we can begin to safeguard ourselves against sin.

The world teaches us its own view of *marriage.* Marriage, in the world's estimate is a useful social convention: a voluntary arrangement. Like other social arrangements it can be dissolved if it ceases to be beneficial or satisfying to the parties involved. But Scripture teaches that the dissolution of a marriage is not merely the ending of a legal or social contact. Husband and wife are one flesh. To end a marriage is to rip a living person in two. It cannot be achieved without the most appalling damage to both parties. The person who resolves to leave his/her marriage partner to look for satisfaction elsewhere opts for self-destruction. He is 'scooping fire into his lap' or 'walking on hot coals'.

The world teaches us its own view of 'romance'. It is, we are taught, the key to successful relationships. C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape* summed up hell's achievement like this:

> We have done this through the poets and novelists by persuading the humans that a curious and usually short-lived experience which they call 'being in love' is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can, and ought to, render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage which does not do so is no longer binding. This idea is our parody of an idea that came from the enemy.

Indeed it is. Scripture bears testimony to the reality of romantic love. But Scripture also teaches that passionate emotional involvement is no guarantee of the suitability of the lovers. Nor is its absence necessarily a hindrance to enduring and satisfying relationships.

The world teaches us its own view of *sexual attraction.* It is seen as a mysterious irresistible force. Countless TV dramas reinforce the message. Once the arrow of sexual attraction has struck, there is no remedy. The only solution to temptation is to surrender to it. If we attempt to resist it will continue to grow. Adultery is inevitable. Indeed the world goes further. Not only is it impossible to resist desire. It is dangerous even to try. Repression is the ultimate evil. To batten down our desires is to invite all sorts of psychological problems.

The world teaches us its own view of *sexual pleasure.* It is our inalienable right: it is virtually our *duty.* Without it, life is not worth living. There is a particular level of sexual pleasure which is to be viewed as the norm. Those who fall short of it are deprived and should seek at all costs to remedy their 'failure'. Hence the respectability of 'How to . . .' sex manuals and the profitability of sex therapy clinics. Endless films have established a standard of ecstasy to be attained. Partners who fail to attain it are 'incompatible' and should consider seeking satisfaction elsewhere.

The world teaches us its own view of *human freedom.* In the end, all the other

arguments come back to this. We are taught that we have the right to live our lives without reference to our Creator. My body is my own. I can decide what to do with my life. If I choose to damage myself, that's my business. Nobody can tell me what to do.

Some spokesmen of this viewpoint are careful to add 'providing that I don't hurt anyone else'. Others are more consistent. Our freedom is absolute. Not even the good of my children or my marriage-partner should be considered. My only responsibility is to seek my own happiness.

Why take so much space to outline what I believe to be the world's thinking? Aren't we familiar enough with it already?

Yes. We are so familiar with it that we no longer notice it in our midst. We take it for granted. To a great extent we have capitulated in all these areas of thought. The extent of our surrender is evident in the Christian books on relationships that flood in from the U.S.A. Many of them accept unreservedly the attitudes I have outlined. They are frankly hedonistic. They idolise pleasure. They exalt sexual attractiveness as the supreme goal of the Christian woman. They insist on the impossibility of contentment without sexual fulfilment.

The success of the world's propaganda is evident too in the way we run our youth-fellowships. We take it for granted that our young people will pair off while still in their early teens. *Jackie* and *Blue Jeans* have assured them that is the healthy norm. We accept it. We accept that they will go through a series of relationships, discarding boyfriends and girlfriends when they become boring or cease to attract. Apparently we believe that they can make and break bonds of physical affection without damaging themselves. Small wonder that these same teenagers, when married, live by the same assumptions.

We have no right to be shocked when Christians commit adultery. It is our cowardice – our failure to uphold absolute standards – that has made it possible. We are terrified lest we should ever appear narrow, legalistic or (worst of all) *Victorian.* We have taught our youngsters to *giggle* at the immaturity of former generations of Christians who outlawed the theatre, disapproved of dancing, insisted on chaperonage and restricted the public discussion of sexual matters. We have allowed them to believe that we in our generation have reached such a pinnacle of godliness and sophistication that we can safely discard the wisdom of the past. In our gullibility we have accepted the world's estimate of its own progress and wisdom.

2. False confidence

When happily married Christians hear of others who have fallen into sexual sin, they are invariably horrified and bewildered. They cannot imagine how such a thing could happen. They *know* it could never happen to themselves. Paul wrote (discussing sexual sin): 'If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don-t fall' (1 Cor 10:12). *It is the Christian who cannot imagine himself falling into sexual sin who is most likely to do so.* If you are reading this article purely to gain insight on why *other* Christians commit adultery, beware! You are not immune from temptation. There is no stage at which Christians are out of danger. Happy marriage does not guarantee immunity. Nor does length of Christian experience. If Satan can lure us into a sense of security, we become his prime target. We need to take seriously the reality of Satanic malice and subtlety. As long as we have a fallen nature for him to exploit, we are capable of being trapped into even the grossest sins.

3. Naivety about spiritual relationships

In the majority of cases, Christians who commit adultery do so with fellow-Christians. More often than not, their relationship develops from what they view as a spiritual friendship. What draws them to their so-called lover is 'spiritual' attraction. People in the world assure themselves that their relationships are 'platonic' and that they are safe. Christians have the same naive complacency about their 'spiritual' friendships.

John White cites a typical case. Joan was married to an alcoholic. Bill was her pastor.

'It came as a shock to realise one day that Pastor Bill, the man who had led her to Christ was not without his own troubles. Not that he asked for pity as one by one the details of his own burdens came to light. He wanted her to know that in some obscure way Joan's presence at their weekly sessions had helped him as much as they seemed to have helped her. She was glad to know that it could be so. She promised to pray. It made her debt to him that much less. She was also surprised to realise how happy it made her just to enjoy talking with him and to know that she could give back to him a measure of the strength he had given her.

What began as a plea for help and an outpouring of pain became a sharing of mutual difficulties and a source of prayerful encouragement. A man and a woman found increasing strength in each other, strength to face difficult days in their respective homes. Gratitude and respect grew to friendship and friendship to affection.

The steps by which that same affection deepened and was expressed physically are of little consequence. What is important is that both, after heart searching, decided they were doing no wrong.'

Christians can be extraordinarily naive about relationships. They trust one another's declarations. Tom explains to Mary that his affection for her is merely brotherly. Mary explains to Tom that their friendship doesn't affect her relationship with her husband. Both may believe that what they are saying is true. Both are liable to be both deceived and deceitful.

Often, again, the problem is that Christians are too nice. When Tom explains to Mary that he is insecure and needs reassurance of her sisterly affection, she is reluctant to hurt him by refusing the physical warmth that will ultimately lead to sexual involvement. When Mary explains to Tom that she is lonely and needs his friendship, he feels that it is his Christian responsibility to give her the support she needs.

We need to take seriously the doctrine of remaining sin. Until we are in glory, it remains true that the most innocent and 'spiritual' relationships can slide into immorality.

4. The Counselling revolution

John White's example highlights a further point. I have spoken earlier of the number of pastors who in recent years have become involved in adulterous relationships. Again and again, such tragedies arise out of 'counselling' situations.

We have swallowed too easily the world's assumption that personal problems are best resolved by talking about them. In so doing, we have exposed pastors and other counsellors to extreme temptation. We all know that it is flattering to be asked for advice. It makes us feel warm and needed when others turn to us for help. Where women are coming to pastors and sharing intimate secrets (particularly secrets related to their marriages) it is inevitable that bonds of emotional loyalty will be created which frequently will develop into adulterous relationships. Often the confidences which the woman shares with her pastor are matters which she cannot repeat to her husband afterwards – and the pastor knows it. Already, a bond of loyalty and secrecy is established which excludes the husband.

Nowhere in the Bible are we taught to go to some spiritual 'expert' to discuss or share our sins or the emotional dilemmas that surround them. The emphasis of the Bible writers again and again is that our responsibility is to sort out our own sins in the light of Scripture. To share certain problems with close friends of the same sex is merely natural. But to become involved in 'problem-sharing' relationships with members of the opposite sex is folly. My own policy as a pastor is simple. When married women ask for opportunity to talk to me about personal problems, I want to know *why*. If they are asking for help to be sure exactly what Scripture teaches on a subject, that is my role as a pastor. But if they are looking not for teaching but for emotional support, I do not get involved. I know my own heart too

well. The Protestant insistence on the abolition of the confessional was not only theological: it sprang from practical experience of the way confessional relationships could and did pave the way to immorality.

5. False views of guidance

Again and again, when Christians become involved in adulterous relationships, they justify their sin by the 'guidance' they have received. Sometimes they talk of verses of Scripture which have come powerfully to their minds. Sometimes they speak of inward peace, extraordinary freedom in prayer or of inner voices and impulses. Sometimes again they point out a remarkable chain of 'providential' circumstances through which God has 'led' them. In short, they appeal to all those forms of guidance which we as evangelicals have taught them to expect.

The doctrine of guidance they have been taught is a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture. There is only one way in which God guides his people. He guides them through the plain teaching of the Bible applied rationally to individual situations. When we teach Christians to expect guidance through any other means, we open the possibility that they will be 'guided' into sin. If we allow other means of guidance to stand alongside Scripture, they will ultimately supplant Scripture itself.

It is wrong even to ask for guidance about matters on which God has already spoken. God has said: *You shall not commit adultery.* The Christian who asks for guidance about an adulterous or *potentially* adulterous relationship is almost certainly hoping to find a way to evade the commandment's force. Tragically, those who look for such guidance generally find it. In the end, they can always persuade themselves that they have had a 'word from the Lord' justifying their desires.

How may Christians keep themselves from adultery?

Again, there are no simple answers. But there are plain commands in Scripture to guide the Christian who fears the deceitfulness of his or her own heart.

Meditation on the law of the Lord

If the primary danger is the conditioning of the world's thinking, our primary defence is meditation on the law of the Lord. That is the emphasis of the passage that stands at the head of this article. 'My son, keep your father's commands . . . bind them upon your heart for ever; fasten them around your neck'. The world presses upon us its view of marriage, romance, attraction, pleasure. We must know what Scripture says on all these things. Each TV drama, each novel, each advertisement presents to us the world's philosophy. We are to expose its subtle propaganda by the light of God's law. Only as we meditate upon that law day and night can we be safe. This means more than 'learning Bible verses'. It means the hard slog of examining each commandment, working out the points at which it challenges the world's thinking, bringing it to bear upon our own assumptions and patterns of behaviour.

Marriage

The finest practical safeguard against adultery is the institution of marriage! (1 Cor 7:2). The writer of Proverbs again: 'May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful dear – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?' (Prov 5:18). Those who realise the dangers of sexual sin should be most concerned to build solid and satisfying marriages. Calvin's words of warning to those who believe they can ignore God's institution have a contemporary ring:

> . . . those who are assailed by incontinence, and unable successfully to war against it, should betake themselves to the remedy of marriage, and thus cultivate chastity in the way of their calling. Those incapable of self-restraint, if they apply not to the remedy allowed and provided for intemperance, war with God and resist his ordinance. And let no man tell me (as many in the present day

do) that he can do all things, God helping! The help of God is present only with those who walk in his ways (Ps 91:14), that is in his calling, from which all withdraw themselves who, omitting the remedies provided by God, vainly and presumptuously strive to struggle with and surmount their natural feelings.

Purity of mind

'When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me" – each one is tempted when by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin' (Jas 1:13-15). The sinful act is the child of sinful desire. To feel desire is natural. To brood upon it and allow it to grow is sinful. Adulterous relationships do not come into being overnight. When Christians commit adultery with their bodies, they have first committed it in their minds.

Sinful desires must be put to death (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24). They must not be discussed or thought about or brooded upon. They must be killed. There must be no delay and no mercy. The desire must die before it gives birth to the monster of adultery.

Common sense

Paul told Timothy to *flee youthful lusts.* In other words, run away from them. Stay as far from temptation as possible. The writer of Proverbs has the same common-sense approach: 'Keep to a path far from her (the adulteress); do not go near the door of her house' (5:8). God has promised that we will be protected when we 'fall into temptation'. But there is no such promise for those who voluntarily choose temptation. We are aware that certain individuals stir our blood. Stay away from them. We know that certain records awaken romantic longings within us. Get rid of them. We know that particular situations present temptation. Avoid them. J. B. Phillips paraphrases Romans 13:14: 'Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and *give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.'*

Physical discipline

Paul again: 'I beat my body and make it my slave . . .' (1 Cor 9:27). He is not talking about wilfully torturing himself. He is saying that he maintains personal physical discipline. His body knows who is boss. His appetites are under control.

Self-indulgence in one area of life will affect every other area. Greedy, lazy, self-indulgent Christians are unlikely to be self-controlled and disciplined when they face sexual temptation. David's adultery with Bathsheba happened when he was lazing in Jerusalem 'at the time when kings go off to war' (2 Sam 11:1). He abandoned his responsibilities and sent Joab to lead in his place. His ill-disciplined life laid him wide open to sexual temptation.

The eternal perspective

'The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery . . . *those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom'* (Gal 6:19) 'Outside the gates are . . . the sexually immoral' (Rev 22:15). 'Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. . . .'

Sin can bring – in the short term – real pleasure. But to opt for sin is to opt for hell. We are to maintain an eternal perspective. We are to live with the reality of judgement and the certainty of God's verdict on the immoral always before our eyes. That perspective will keep us from drifting into sin.

The throne of grace

'We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way – just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our hour of need' (Heb 4:15-16).

That is the ultimate resource in time of temptation. Our Lord Jesus has experienced the reality of temptation. He knows how dreadful loneliness can be. He knows how insistently our physical appetites can call. He knows how

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These reflections on the vastness of the world's present needs come from Heinrich David von Seefried, church planter in West Germany.

Figuring it Out

'When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming towards him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we find bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do' (John 6:5-6).

This text reminds us of a situation in which the disciples were confronted by an insuperable problem. Philip was asked an impossible question and replied, 'Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'

In our own day by far the most desperate and perplexing problem we face is that of world evangelisation. By the year 2000 there may be 6-7 billion people on this planet. We see committees meeting to devise ways and means of getting enough money and personnel to reach the lost world. They plan, scheme, promote and devise, only to find that there is neither enough money nor workers to get the job done. For example, it could be calculated that at least ten thousand missionaries are needed. Each new missionary would cost in the region of £15,000 ($25,000) a year which would mean that £150 million ($250 million) a year would have to be raised! In human terms the situation is clearly hopeless and after all possible schemes had been suggested we would be exactly where Philip was when he produced a ludicrous answer.

Just as the Lord tested Philip, we need to be constantly reminded that our sufficiency is found in Christ. We haven't enough labourers, we haven't enough money, all we do have is the Lord. What is to be accomplished is to be accomplished through his grace and power, not our human efforts alone. There is sovereign sufficiency to be found in these words: 'he already had in mind what he was going to do'. The Lord is not a loser and we do not serve on a losing team. Let us not see things through our human eyes alone but through the eyes of faith. Christ is sufficient.

We must never fall into passivity or fatalism. Neither must we limit God by assuming that if we can only hit the right method he will be bound to bless us. This would be as absurd as the disciples meeting after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 to analyse exactly what factors led to the successful supply: the seating arrangement in groups of fifty or the manner in which the baskets were passed around. We often look back with envy on times of blessing in the past and seek desperately for the key to the success of men such as Whitefield or Spurgeon. And there are any number of opinions today on how to obtain the Lord's blessing. Some say that it all hinges on whether we use modern methods, modern Bibles and so on. The Restorationists (as we saw in *RT* 89) claim that the blessing can only come as we go back to apostles and prophets and miracles. There is no end of speculation on just what it is that will bring God's favour to us so that we will have enough spiritual bread to feed the world. Our generation is always looking to find a reason why God should revive us. Bluntly, there is no good reason in ourselves why he should. The answer is found in Christ. The miracle in John 6

The surface of our planet contains the fossilised remains of once living plants and animals. For over 100 years, it has been customary to interpret the fossils only *from within the framework of the theory of evolution. This article argues that an alternative explanation of origins should be considered: divine creation. The absence of transitional forms in the fossil record is an embarrassment for evolutionists, but is the expectation of creationists. Consequently, it is time to think again about the meaning of the fossils! This article was first printed in* Outlook *with whom we have reciprocal arrangements.*

Thinking Again About Fossils

David J. Tyler

Throughout history, people have known that some of the rocks of the earth have fossils entombed in them. Shells of marine creatures are relatively easy to find, but it is generally in museums that we are able to view the remains of plants, fishes, reptiles, mammals and other once-living organisms. People have asked questions: What *are* these fossils in the rocks? What do they mean? How did they get there? The answers are not so easy! Debate over differences of view continues to this day.

Before the theory of evolution became popular, it was generally believed that God had created all the plants and animals, and that great catastrophes had buried living things in sediment, after which they turned into fossils. Those who studied the fossil record found their creationistic views consistent with the evidence from the rocks.

Fossils and Darwinism

Although Charles Darwin was interested in fossils, he never specialised in their study. Rather, Darwin was a

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took place because of grace. And, when God uses us, it is only because of his grace. If we are to reach this world with the gospel it will only be on the basis of his grace.

The full employment of all the means of grace is essential. In the case of the feeding of the 5,000 the work of distribution had to be done by the disciples. The point is that the essential multiplication of the food came from the Divine Lord. And so it is today. With all the diligence of which we are capable we strive to use the means of grace. As we pray, preach, teach, and evangelise, administrate and organise, publish and distribute, broadcast and correspond, and so on, let us always remember that the increase which we look for, will have to be extraordinary in its power and quantity if it is to be adequate. The supernatural and essential increase can only come from God Triune. Do you believe that he will meet the need? The promises of the Bible call for our intercession. But with all our prayers and hopes and anxieties let us remember that as we ourselves began as Christians through grace freely given, so let us go forward trusting in the same source of sovereign free grace to meet the vast needs of this dying world. That saving grace that bought you and me is the same in essence that will yet have to meet the desperate and rapidly increasing needs to the world today.

naturalist, who concentrated his attention on living things. He was impressed by the amount of variation which organisms exhibited, and he used this as evidence to support his theory of evolution by natural selection. He saw no limit to variation. The theory proposed was that continual small gradual changes, when selected according to the principle of survival of the fittest, were able to change fishes into amphibians, amphibians into reptiles, and so on. Darwin believed he had plenty of evidence to show variation in the present. But what about the past? If his theory is true, should we not expect the fossil record to document the origin of species – illustrating the gradual changes that were necessary to transform one type of organism into another. Do the fossils confirm Darwin's evolutionary ideas?

It is interesting to note that at first Darwin's theory was not well received by palaeontologists – the scientists who study fossils. They could not see any evidence of the gradual changes predicted by his theory of evolution by natural selection. Some variation was present, but nothing to suggest one type of animal changing into another. The response of the Darwinists was to say that the fossil record was both imperfectly preserved and imperfectly known. They referred to the existence of numerous gaps in the geological record and suggested that there would always be difficulty in finding 'transitional forms' between species. However, they also held out the hope that some of the gaps would be filled as a result of subsequent collecting.

Over 100 years have passed – and millions of man-hours have been spent examining fossils. Has the hope been fulfilled? Have the transitional forms been found? Until recently, the general public have been given the impression that Darwinism has been amply confirmed by the fossil record. In 1958, the British Museum (Natural History) displayed an exhibition on evolution to mark the 100 years anniversary of the first publication on the subject by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. In the exhibition handbook, Sir Gavin de Beer said this about the fossil record: 'The palaeontological record provides evidence of the course of evolution in the past. Fossil material is in places now so rich that it can be used for quantitative studies in evolution.' The reader is given no hint of the problems facing evolutionary theory caused by the fossils. At that time, de Beer and many other leading scientists presented a picture of the fossil record which today must be recognised as seriously defective.

Fossils and New Ideas About Evolutionary Change

The last 10 years has seen a remarkable change in discussions about Darwinism. Scholars are much more open in their criticisms of the different theories. Again, palaeontologists have led the way. It seems that the majority of palaeontologists have never been happy with Darwin's 'gradualism', because they do not see the evidence for gradual change in the fossil record. Whilst they recognise the existence of numerous gaps in the sequence of sedimentary rocks, they are not convinced that the fossil record is as impoverished as Darwin had suggested in 'The Origin of Species'. Nowadays, most palaeontologists are ready to admit the near-universal absence of transitional forms and are not willing to explain them away geologically. It is important to realise that although these palaeontologists reject the idea of natural selection acting on small changes (gradualism), they still believe in evolution. The new theory is known as 'Punctuated Equilibria', and it postulates long periods without significant change terminated by short periods of very abrupt change. In their thinking, these evolutionary bursts occurred

sufficiently rapidly to make it unlikely that transitional forms were preserved as fossils. Although this model of evolutionary change is compatible with the fossil record, it conflicts with the theoretical ideas about the mechanism of evolution which have been developed by the biologists. The evolutionary biologists rightly complain that the supporters of punctuated equilibria have no mechanism to account for rapid evolution. They also revive the argument which says that the fossil record is so inadequate, that it can never be used as evidence for or against Darwinism. And so the controversy continues!

Points for Thought

What are we to learn from this debate? Obviously, it is very easy to get lost in the technicalities, and so a few general points are noted here.

1. It must not be overlooked that the expectations of Darwin's theory about the evolutionary changes occurring in living things in the past have *never been confirmed* by the fossil record. The evidence for Darwinian gradualism in the fossil record is non-existent. It seems so obvious that if this major prediction cannot be justified, then it is necessary to re-examine the original theory! The palaeontological evidence against gradualism has always existed – and has become stronger with the passing of years. Darwin's original approach was to emphasise the fragmentary nature of the fossil record, but over 100 years of geological investigation must now be taken into account. Gradualistic evolution can no longer be defended by appealing to an inadequate fossil record.

2. Scientists have allowed theoretical ideas and personal prejudices to influence their handling of the evidence. Why have scientists made claims about the fossil record which are nowadays recognised as misleading? There is a *human aspect* to all scientific work, and it is particularly significant when it comes to the study of origins. Those who believe in creation must believe in a Creator. Those who wish to deny the existence of a Creator God must find a naturalistic explanation of origins – and evolutionary theories provide a way of explaining how living things have come into existence without the need to invoke divine activity.

3. Creationists predict an absence of transitional forms in the fossil record. They do not believe that one type of creature can change into another type, for God has made all living things to reproduce 'according to their kinds'. Whatever else might be said about the fossil record, it is quite consistent with this prediction of the creationists. Consequently, creation has a right to be considered as an explanation of origins.

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overwhelmingly attractive another person can seem. He does not condone our sin.

But he sympathises with our temptations. And he gives grace – precisely the grace we need at exactly the time we need it.

We should learn *now* how to react when the time of temptation comes. In the hour of need we should go to Christ without delay – the moment we are aware of the attractiveness of a person who is not for us. Too often we delay until the problem reaches unmanageable proportions. We must learn to be sensitive enough to recognise the first stirrings of temptation. Then we must deal with them radically and ruthlessly. By the grace he gives, we can.

Andrew Taylor is a G.P. practising in Liverpool. Here he does not attempt to deal with the misguided government campaign in the U.K. which shirks the moral issues for fear of offending the permissive lobby, but rather Dr. Taylor provides a survey of the basic facts, which in spite of all the publicity still tend to be overlooked. He concludes with a Christian response.

The scourge of AIDS

Since 1981 a 'new' disease has found its way onto the pages of the medical text books. More surprisingly this same disease is now mentioned most days in the press and on television. This disease is the 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome' (AIDS). Many facts have been discovered about the cause and treatment of the disease but this has been associated with much fiction also. So what is AIDS? How do people catch the disease? Can it be carried? Is it a specific judgement from God?

What is AIDS?
AIDS is a disease which results from an infection with the virus HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) previously called HTLV-III (Human-T.-Lymphotropic Virus III). When the body is infected with this virus it responds by trying to kill and eliminate the virus from the body. However the virus itself is able to live and multiply in the white blood cells (WBC). WBCs are the cells in the blood which are responsible for fighting infection. They also patrol the body and detect tumours (cancers) at very early stages and destroy them. As the HIV replicates in these WBCs the body becomes less and less able to fight off infections. It is also unable to identify developing tumours. Eventually the body succumbs to infection or cancer. It is this which usually kills AIDS sufferers.

How does the disease present?
The disease presents in a number of ways, often with very non-specific symptoms such as weight loss, diarrhoea, swollen lymph nodes (glands), lethargy or recurrent infections.

However a person can be infected with the virus and exhibit no symptoms of disease. It is known that in some people the disease can 'incubate' in the body for up to two years before any symptoms develop. It is even thought that some people can harbour the virus in the body and perhaps never develop symptoms of AIDS. Both these categories of people however are able to pass the virus on to others throughout this period of time, and those to whom they pass it can develop AIDS in the full blown form.

Up to recently it was thought that only about 10% of people who are infected with HIV developed AIDS proper. More recently, reports suggest that 30% of people infected will eventually develop AIDS. Some people put the figure as high as 60%. Only time will tell who is right. It may be that given sufficient time all people infected with the virus will develop AIDS.

How is the disease spread?
There are several ways in which a person is able to be infected with the HIV.

a Sexual intercourse (heterosexual or homosexual).
b By injection in to the body of infected blood (blood transfusion or by

drug addicts using infected needles).

c To babies via the placenta.

d Transfer of other body fluids.

a AIDS, because the first cases in America were exclusively in homosexuals, has been labelled a homosexual disease, passed on by homosexual intercourse. This is not true. It is thought that AIDS initially spread more rapidly among homosexuals as they in general tend to have more sexual partners than heterosexuals. Hence the virus can be spread more quickly.

In Africa where it is thought the disease originated it is a disease of both sexes spread by both heterosexual and homosexual intercourse. In some parts of Africa up to 1:6 people are thought to be infected.

b When the disease was first discovered several people were infected with the virus from transfusions of blood or blood products. This was especially true of haemophiliacs who require frequent blood product transfusions to avoid bleeding. In the U.K. all blood is now screened for AIDS and all blood products are treated to kill the virus so this should not pose a problem.

Some drug addicts inject drugs directly into their blood by using hypodermic needles and syringes. It is often impossible for these addicts to obtain a supply of sterile needles. Not only do they re-use needles but they often share needles without sterilising them. These people are therefore at risk of transferring small amounts of blood from one to another and thereby the AIDS virus spreads. Large numbers of addicts in some cities are infected and act as a pool of carriers to spread the disease to homosexuals, heterosexuals and other drug addicts.

Health Workers who come into contact with blood, especially needles which have been used to take blood are at risk of needle-stick injuries. Over the past five years many people have been injured in this way but up to now as far we we know none has developed AIDS proper. Several have been shown to have contracted the virus and so be carriers, but none have died from AIDS.

c Women who are carriers of the HIV can pass the virus to babies developing in the womb. This gives rise to tragic cases of children being born with the virus in their bodies and are therefore at risk of developing AIDS.

d The HIV is known to be present in fluids other than blood, that is by saliva, semen and tears. Although it is known that the disease can be spread by blood and presumably semen also, the quantity of virus is so small in saliva and tears that it is not known if these can also spread the disease.

It is thought that casual contact cannot spread the virus. Hence it is proposed that by just living with a person who is a carrier of the HIV you are not at risk. For example there is no evidence that by using the same crockery or cutlery, eating food prepared by or touching casually an HIV carrier you are at risk.

How serious a problem is AIDS?

In the U.K. nearly 300 people are known to have died from AIDS and over 500 people in all are known to have AIDS. Estimates for the number of people infected with the HIV but not showing signs of the disease vary. Some people put the figure at only 10,000. A more realistic figure is probably about 30,000. These people have the virus in their bodies and probably don't know it. They are all capable of passing the virus to other people who are again able to transmit it to sexual partners. The

number of cases of AIDS is doubling every 10 months and by 1988 2,000 people in the U.K. will have the disease.

However perhaps the most worrying thing about all this is that everybody who develops AIDS proper dies. At present there are no drugs to cure AIDS. Development is going apace to invent drugs to kill the virus but none are yet known. More recently several drugs have been shown to slow down or stop the virus replicating in the body. They do not cure full blown AIDS but can slow its progress. No vaccine to prevent the disease infecting people has yet been developed or is likely to be developed in the near future.

The Government considers the problem so serious that it has set up a special committee to educate people about the disease. Every home in the country has been circulated with details of the disease, how it is spread and how to try to stop yourself catching it. It is a scourge which if unchecked threatens society as we know it. In the absence of a cure or vaccine and given that the sexual activities of people do not change there may be 8,000 cases by 1990 and 8,000,000 by the turn of the century in the U.K. alone.

The Christian response

Surely the saddest fact of all about AIDS is that this disease should pose a threat to anyone. When we consider the vast wealth of information that is available on the spread of this disease one thought comes to mind. How can it be that people are so blind and wish to continue in sexual sin despite the risk? *Fidelity within marriage and chastity outside marriage would virtually dispose of the disease within one generation.*

Sadly the words of our Lord are still true . . . 'but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil' (Jn 3:19). Jesus told us that 'every one who sins is a slave to sin' (Jn 8:34). A slave is not his own master but is subject to another master. How true this is in the case of sexual sin. Despite the risk of serious disease and death and in the past from diseases such as syphilis man continued in sexual sin. With the advent of antibiotics the only barrier it was thought to 'free love' was pregnancy. With the advent of 'reliable contraception' all barriers were removed and promiscuity became rife despite the warnings of God's word. 'Do not be deceived God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction' (Gal 6:7).

The response of the Christian must be to preach Christ. He must point out that sin is not just to be viewed in the context of a social responsibility but as an insult against God, who cannot be mocked. Only a great spiritual revival will turn this country from sin to salvation, from the love of self and pleasure to the love of God and the Lamb who was slain.

The attitude of the Christian must be to condemn sin in all forms but not to do this as an end alone but to point to the Saviour of sinners who will save by repentance and faith, 'Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me' (Ps 57:1), must be the cry of our country in this time of need.

To those who are afflicted with this dreadful disease we must show the compassion of Christ. The disease is not sin itself; it merely reflects and proclaims the sin of those who have contracted it through homosexual sin or promiscuity. Yet we must remember Christ's words 'If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her' (Jn 8:7). We must not throw stones at the sufferer but point to the Saviour who alone is able to heal and save.

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